

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00

USSS-00 NSAE-00 INRE-00 /031 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1317

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR NIACT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T ROME 11128

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS IS IT

SUBJECT: SALE OF BLANKETS TO ISRAEL

REF: (A) STATE 203467 (B) ROME 11067 (C) ROME 11092

1. DCM FINALLY ABLE TO ARRANGE APPOINTMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY SECRETARY GENERAL GAJA AT 6 P.M. LOCAL TIME OCTOBER 13 TO INFORM ITALIANS OF ISRAELI REQUEST FOR PURCHASE OF BLANKETS FROM US STOCKS IN ITALY AND US DECISION TO MEET THIS REQUEST. GAJA SAID HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD US DESIRE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO ISRAELI REQUEST AND HUMANITARIAN NATURE OF ISRAELI REQUEST. GAJA SAID ITALIANS WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT OBJECT TO SALE AND SHIPMENT OF BLANKETS HOWEVER THEY DID NOT REPEAT NOT WISH SHIPMENT TO BE MADE ON ISRAELI FLAG CARRIER.

2. GAJA RECALLED UPROAR OF PRESS AND PARLIAMENT EARLIER THIS WEEK OVER LOADING OF PORTUGUESE FLAG VESSELS WITH MUNITIONS AT LA SPEZIA. HE ALSO NOTED DEMARCHE FROM SYRIANS ALLEGING THAT ITALIANS HAD PERMITTED US TO SHIP WAR MATERIAL TO ISRAEL FROM BASES IN ITALY. IN ADDITION GAJA SAID THAT EGYPTIAN AND IRAQI AMBASSADORS HAD ALSO MADE DEMARCHES TO HIM, ACCUSING ITALIANS OF PERMITTING TRANSIT OF VOLUNTEERS ON ROUTE TO ISRAEL, SHIPMENT OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO ISRAEL FROM NATO INSTALLATIONS IN ITALY

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AND MOVEMENT OF US SHIPS FROM ITALY TO MID EAST WAR ZONE. GAJA SAID HE HAD DENIED ALL THESE ALLEGATIONS AND HAD ASKED EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO PROVIDE NAMES OF TRANSITING VOLUNTEERS SO ITALIANS

COULD INVESTIGATE CHARGES. HE SAID EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR HAD NO NAMES TO OFFER. GAJA ALSO TOLD US THAT ITALIANS ARE EXPECTING SPECIAL LIBYAN ENVOY TO ARRIVE IN ITALY SHORTLY AND ASSUME HE HAS SIMILAR ACCUSATIONS TO REGISTER WITH ITALIANS. GAJA EXPRESSED VIEW THAT ARABS WERE MAKING SIMILAR DEMARCHE IN MANY EUROPEAN CAPITALS.

2. GAJA ASKED THAT WE UNDERSTAND EXTREMELY DELICATE POSITION OF ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IN THIS MATTER. HE SAID HE WAS SURE THAT ARABS WERE WATCHING FOR ANY HINT THAT ITALY BEING USED AS STAGING AREA FOR MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR ISRAELIS AND THAT PRESS HERE WAS PRONE TO REPORT DISTORTED INFORMATION WHICH COULD BE EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING TO GOVERNMENT. FOR THIS REASON ISRAELI FLAG CARRIER JUST TOO RISKY.

3. WE RECOMMEND THAT WE INFORM ISRAELIS THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO GO AHEAD WITH BLANKET SALE BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT THEY BE SHIPPED IN NON-ISRAELI FLAG CARRIER.

4. WE HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT RECEIVED PROPER AUTHORIZATION FOR US MILITARY TO DISPOSE OF THESE STOCKS TO ISRAELIS. EUCOM SHOULD BE GIVEN THIS AUTHORITY. VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 11 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ROME11128
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750018-1111
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731065/abqcegwu.tel
Line Count: 79
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN ROME
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: (A) STATE 203467 (B) ROME 11067 (C) ROME 11092
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Sep-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <20-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SALE OF BLANKETS TO ISRAEL
TAGS: MASS, IT, IS
To: STATE NIACT INFO TEL AVIV NIACT
USCINCEUR NIACT
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005